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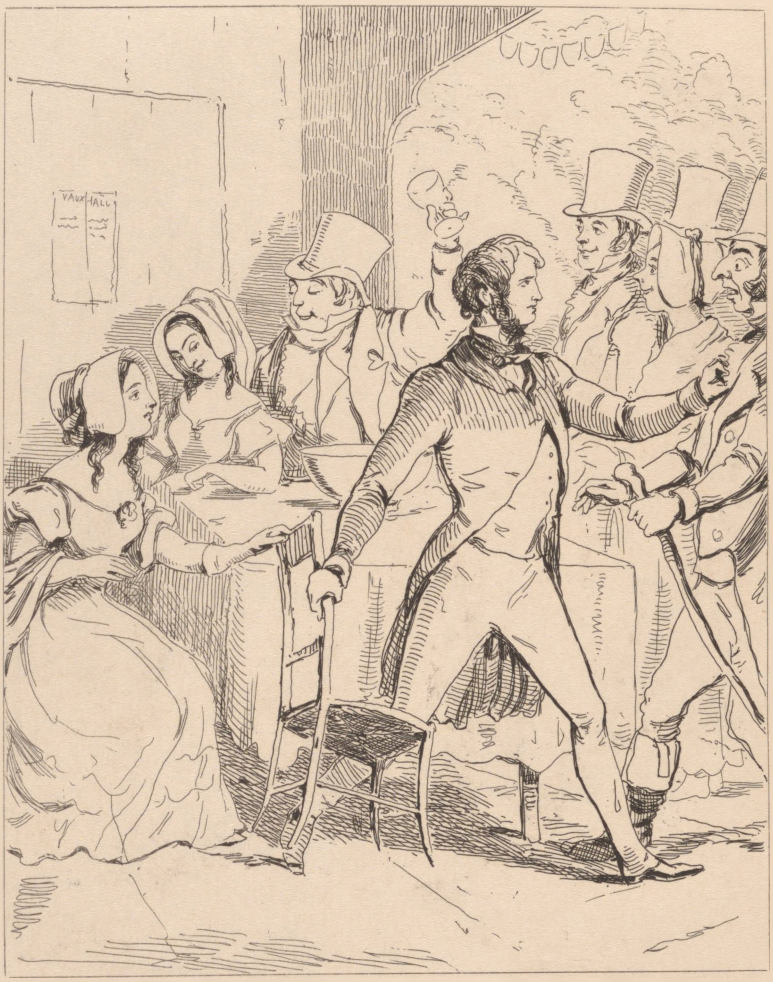
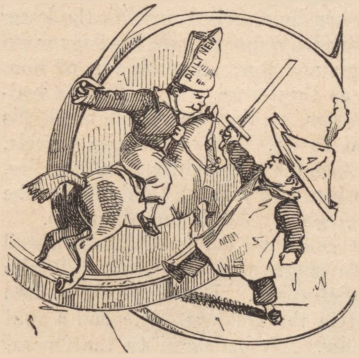


Mr. Joseph in a state of excitement

Rebecca makes acquaintance with A live Baronet

CHAPTER V.

DOBBIN OF OURS.



UFF'S fight with Dobbin, and the unexpected issue of that contest, will long be remembered by every man who was educated at Dr. Swishtail's famous school. The latter youth (who used to be called Heigh-ho Dobbin, Gee-ho Dobbin, and by many other names indicative of puerile contempt) was the quietest, the clumsiest, and, as it seemed, the dullest of all Dr. Swishtail's young gentlemen. His parent was a grocer in the city: and it was bruited abroad that he was admitted into Dr. Swishtail's academy upon what are called 'mutual principles'—that is to say, the expenses of his board and schooling were defrayed by his father, in goods not money; and he stood there—almost at the bottom of the school—in his scraggy corduroys and jacket, through the seams of which his great big bones were bursting—as the representative of so many pounds of tea, candles, sugar, mottled-soap, plums, (of which a very mild proportion was supplied for the puddings of the establishment), and other commodities. A dreadful day it was for young Dobbin when one of the youngsters of the school, having run into the the town upon a poaching excursion for hardbake and polonies, espied the cart of Dobbin & Rudge, Grocers and Oilmen, Thames Street, London, at the Doctor's door, discharging a cargo of the wares in which the firm dealt.

Young Dobbin had no peace after that. The jokes were frightful, and merciless against him. "Hullo, Dobbin," one wag would say, "here's good news in the paper. Sugars is ris', my boy." Another would set a sum—"If a pound of mutton-candles cost sevenpence-halfpenny, how much must Dobbin cost?" and a roar would follow from all the circle of young knaves, usher and all, who rightly considered that the selling of goods by retail is a shameful and infamous practice, meriting the contempt and scorn of all real gentlemen.

"Your father's only a merchant, Osborne," Dobbin said in private to the little boy who had brought down the storm upon him. At which the latter replied haughtily, "My father's a gentleman, and keeps his carriage;" and Mr. William Dobbin retreated to a remote outhouse in the play-ground, where he passed a half-holiday in the bitterest sadness and wo. Who amongst us is there that does not recollect similar hours of

bitter, bitter childish grief? Who feels injustice; who shrinks before a slight; who has a sense of wrong so acute, and so glowing a gratitude for kindness, as a generous boy? and how many of those gentle souls do you degrade, estrange, torture, for the sake of a little loose arithmetic, and miserable dog-latin?

Now, William Dobbin, from an incapacity to acquire the rudiments of the above language, as they are propounded in that wonderful book the Eton Latin Grammar, was compelled to remain among the very last of Doctor Swishtail's scholars, and was 'taken down' continually by little fellows with pink faces and pinafores when he marched up with the lower form, a giant amongst them, with his downcast, stupefied look, his dogs-eared primer, and his tight corduroys. High and low, all made fun of him. They sewed up those corduroys, tight as they were. They cut his bed-strings. They upset buckets and benches, so that he might break his shins over them, which he never failed to do. They sent him parcels, which, when opened, were found to contain the paternal soap and candles. There was no little fellow but had his jeer and joke at Dobbin; and he bore everything quite patiently, and was entirely dumb and miserable.

Cuff, on the contrary, was the great chief and dandy of the Swishtail Seminary. He smuggled wine in. He fought the town-boys. Ponies used to come for him to ride home on Saturdays. He had his top-boots in his room, in which he used to hunt in the holidays. He had a gold repeater: and took snuff like the Doctor. He had been to the Opera, and knew the merits of the principal actors, preferring Mr. Kean to Mr. Kemble. He could knock you off forty Latin verses in an hour. He could make French poetry. What else didn't he know, or couldn't he do? They said even the Doctor himself was afraid of him.

Cuff, the unquestioned king of the school, ruled over his subjects, and bullied them, with splendid superiority. This one blacked his shoes: that toasted his bread, others would fag out, and give him balls at cricket during whole summer afternoons. 'Figs' was the fellow whom he despised most, and with whom, though always abusing him, and sneering at him, he scarcely ever condescended to hold personal communication.

One day in private, the two young gentlemen had had a difference. Figs, alone in the school-room, was blundering over a home letter; when Cuff, entering, bade him go upon some message, of which tarts were probably the subject.

"I can't," says Dobbin; "I want to finish my letter."

"You *can't?*" says Mr. Cuff, laying hold of that document, (in which many words were scratched out, many were mis-spelt, on which had been spent I don't know how much thought, and labour, and tears; for the poor fellow was writing to his mother, who was fond of him, although she was a grocer's wife, and lived in a back parlor in Thames-street), "You *can't?*" says Mr. Cuff: "I should like to know why, pray? Can't you write to old Mother Figs to-morrow?"

"Don't call names," Dobbin said, getting off the bench, very nervous.

"Well, sir, will you go?" crowed the cock of the school.

"Put down the letter," Dobbin replied; "no gentleman readth letterth."

"Well, *now* will you go?" says the other.

"No, I won't. Don't strike, or I'll *thmash* you," roars out Dobbin, springing to a leaden inkstand, and looking so wicked, that Mr. Cuff paused, turned down his coat sleeves again, put his hands into his pockets, and walked away with a sneer. But he never meddled personally with the grocer's boy after that; though we must do him the justice to say he always spoke of Mr. Dobbin with contempt behind his back.

Some time after this interview, it happened that Mr. Cuff, on a sunshiny afternoon, was in the neighbourhood of poor William Dobbin, who was lying under a tree in the play-ground, spelling over a favourite copy of the Arabian Nights which he had—apart from the rest of the school,

who were pursuing their various sports—quite lonely, and almost happy. If people would but leave children to themselves; if teachers would cease to bully them; if parents would not insist upon directing their thoughts, and dominating their feelings—those feelings and thoughts which are a mystery to all (for how much do you and I know of each other, of our children, of our fathers, of our neighbour, and how far more beautiful and sacred are the thoughts of the poor lad or girl whom you govern likely to be, than those of the dull and world-corrupted

person who rules him?)—if, I say, parents and masters would leave their children alone a little more,—small harm would accrue, although a less quantity of *as in præsenti* might be acquired.

Well, William Dobbin had for once forgotten the world, and was away with Sindbad the Sailor in the Valley of Diamonds, or with Prince Whatdyecallem and the Fairy Peribanou in that delightful cavern where the Prince found her, and whither we should all like to make a tour; when shrill cries, as of a little fellow weeping, woke up his pleasant reverie; and, looking up, he saw Cuff before him, belabouring a little boy.

It was the lad who had peached upon him about the grocer's cart; but he bore little malice, not at least towards the young and small. "How dare you, sir, break the bottle?" says Cuff to the little urchin, swinging a yellow cricket-stump over him.

The boy had been instructed to get over the play-ground wall (at a selected spot where the broken-glass had been removed from the top, and niches made convenient in the brick); to run a quarter of a mile; to purchase a pint of rum-shrub on credit; to brave all the Doctor's outlying spies, and to clamber back into the play-ground again; during the performance of which feat, his foot had slipt, and the bottle was broken, and the shrub had been spilt, and his pantaloons had been damaged, and he appeared before his employer a perfectly guilty and trembling, though harmless, wretch.

"How dare you, sir, break it?" says Cuff; "you blundering little thief. You drank the shrub, and now you pretend to have broken the bottle. Hold out your hand, sir."

Down came the stump with a great heavy thump on the child's hand. A moan followed. Dobbin looked up. The Prince Peribanou had fled into the inmost cavern with Prince Ahmed: the Roc had whisked away Sindbad the Sailor out of the Valley of Diamonds out of sight, far into the clouds: and there was every-day life before honest William; and a big boy beating a little one without cause.

"Hold out your other hand, sir," roars Cuff to his little school-fellow, whose face was distorted with pain. Dobbin quivered, and gathered himself up in his narrow old clothes.

"Take that, you little devil!" cried Mr. Cuff, and down came the wicket again on the child's hand.—Don't be horrified, ladies, every boy at a public school has done it. Your children will so do and be done by, in all probability. Down came the wicket again; and Dobbin started up.

I can't tell what his motive was. Torture in a public school is as much licensed as the knout in Russia. It would be ungentlemanlike (in a manner) to resist it. Perhaps Dobbin's foolish soul revolted against that exercise of tyranny; or perhaps he had a hankering feeling of revenge in his mind, and longed to measure himself against that splendid bully and tyrant, who had all the glory, pride, pomp, circumstance, banners flying, drums beating, guards saluting, in the place. Whatever may have been his incentive, however, up he sprang, and screamed out, "Hold off, Cuff; don't bully that child any more; or I'll——"

"Or you'll, what?" Cuff asked in amazement at this interruption. "Hold out your hand, you little beast."

"I 'll give you the worst thrashing you ever had in your life," Dobbin said, in reply to the first part of Cuff's sentence; and little Osborne, gasping and in tears, looked up with wonder and incredulity at seeing this amazing champion put up suddenly to defend him: while Cuff's astonishment was scarcely less. Fancy our late monarch George III. when he heard of the revolt of the North American colonies: fancy brazen Goliah when little David stepped forward and claimed a meeting; and you have the feelings of Mr. Reginald Cuff when this rencontre was proposed to him.

"After school," says he, of course; after a pause and a look, as much as to say, 'Make your will, and communicate your best wishes to your friends between this time and that.'

"As you please," Dobbin said. "You must be my bottle-holder, Osborne."

"Well, if you like," little Osborne replied; for you see his papa kept a carriage, and he was rather ashamed of his champion.

Yes, when the hour of battle came, he was almost ashamed to say, "Go it, Figs;" and not a single other boy in the place uttered that cry for the first two or three rounds of this famous combat; at the commencement of which the scientific Cuff, with a contemptuous smile on his face, and as light and as gay as if he was at a ball, planted his blows upon his adversary, and floored that unlucky champion three times running. At each fall there was a cheer; and everybody was anxious to have the honour of offering the conqueror a knee.

"What a licking I shall get when it's over," young Osborne thought, picking up his man. "You'd best give in," he said to Dobbin; "it's only a thrashing, Figs, and you know I'm used to it." But Figs, all whose limbs were in a quiver, and whose nostrils were breathing rage, put his little bottle-holder aside, and went in for a fourth time.

As he did not in the least know how to parry the blows that were aimed at himself, and Cuff had begun the attack on the three preceding occasions, without ever allowing his enemy to strike, Figs now determined that he would commence the engagement by a charge on his own part; and accordingly, being a left-handed man, brought that arm into action, and hit out a couple of times with all his might—once at Mr. Cuff's left eye, and once on his beautiful Roman nose.

Cuff went down this time, to the astonishment of the assembly. "Well hit, by Jove," says little Osborne, with the air of a connoisseur, clapping his man on the back. "Give it him with the left, Figs, my boy."

Figs's left made terrific play during all the rest of the combat. Cuff went down every time. At the sixth round, there were almost as many fellows shouting out, "Go it, Figs," as there were youths exclaiming, "Go it, Cuff." At the twelfth round the latter champion was all abroad, as the saying is, and had lost all presence of mind and power of attack or defence. Figs, on the contrary, was as calm as a quaker. His face being quite pale, his eyes shining open, and a great cut on his under lip bleeding profusely, gave this young fellow a fierce and ghastly air, which perhaps struck terror into many spectators. Nevertheless, his intrepid adversary prepared to close for the thirteenth time.

If I had the pen of a Napier, or a Bell's Life, I should like to describe this combat properly. It was the last charge of the Guard—(that is, *it would* have been, only Waterloo had not yet taken place)—it was Ney's column breasting the hill of La Haye Sainte, bristling with ten thousand bayonets, and crowned with twenty eagles—it was the shout of the beef-eating British, as leaping down the hill they rushed to hug the enemy in the savage arms of battle—in other words, Cuff coming up full of pluck, but quite reeling and groggy, the Fig-merchant put in his left as usual on his adversary's nose, and sent him down for the last time.

"I think *that* will do for him," Figs said, as his opponent dropped as neatly on the green as I have seen Jack Spot's ball plump into the pocket at billiards; and the fact is, when time was called, Mr. Reginald Cuff was not able, or did not choose, to stand up again.

And now all the boys set up such a shout for Figs as would make you think he had been their darling champion through the whole battle; and as absolutely brought Dr. Swishtail out of his study, curious to know the cause of the uproar. He threatened to flog Figs violently, of course; but Cuff, who had come to himself by this time, and was washing his wounds, stood up and said, "It's my fault, sir—not Figs'—not Dobbin's. I was bullying a little boy; and he served me right." By which magnanimous speech he not only saved his conqueror a whipping, but got back all his ascendancy over the boys which his defeat had nearly cost him.

Young Osborne wrote home to his parents an account of the transaction.

"*Sugarcane House, Richmond, March,* 18—.

"Dear Mama,—I hope you are quite well. I should be much obliged to you to send me a cake and five shillings. There has been a fight here between Cuff & Dobbin. Cuff, you know, was the Cock of the School. They fought thirteen rounds, and Dobbin Licked. So Cuff is now Only Second Cock. The fight was about me. Cuff was licking me for breaking a bottle of milk, and Figs wouldn't stand it. We call him Figs because his father is a Grocer—Figs & Rudge, Thames St., City—I think as he fought for me you ought to buy your Tea & Sugar at his father's. Cuff goes home every Saturday, but can't this, because he has 2 Black Eyes. He has a white Pony to come and fetch him, and a groom in livery on a bay mare. I wish my Papa would let me have a Pony, and I am,

"Your dutiful Son,

"George Sedley Osborne.

"P.S. Give my love to little Emmy. I am cutting her out a Coach in cardboard."

In consequence of Dobbin's victory, his character rose prodigiously in the estimation of all his schoolfellows, and the name of Figs which had been a byword of reproach became as respectable and popular a nickname as any other in use in the school. "After all, it's not his fault that his father's a grocer," George Osborne said, who, though a little chap, had a very high popularity among the Swishtail youth; and his opinion was received with great applause. It was voted low to sneer at Dobbin about

this accident of birth. "Old Figs" grew to be a name of kindness and endearment; and the sneak of an usher jeered at him no longer.

And Dobbin's spirit rose with his altered circumstances. He made wonderful advances in scholastic learning. The superb Cuff himself, at whose condescension Dobbin could only blush and wonder, helped him on with his Latin verses; "coached" him in play-hours; carried him triumphantly out of the little-boy class into the middle-sized form; and even there got a fair place for him. It was discovered, that although dull at classical learning, at mathematics he was uncommonly quick. To the contentment of all, he passed third in algebra, and got a French prize-book at the public midsummer examination. You should have seen his mother's face when Telemaque (that delicious romance) was presented to him by the Doctor in the face of the whole school and the parents and company, with an inscription to Gulielmo Dobbin. All the boys clapped hands in token of applause and sympathy. His blushes, his stumbles, his awkwardness, and the number of feet which he crushed as he went back to his place, who shall describe or calculate? Old Dobbin, his father, who now respected him for the first time, gave him two guineas publicly; most of which he spent in a general tuck-out for the school: and he came back in a tail-coat after the holidays.

Dobbin was much too modest a young fellow to suppose that this happy change in all his circumstances arose from his own generous and manly disposition: he chose, from some perverseness, to attribute his good fortune to the sole agency and benevolence of little George Osborne, to whom henceforth he vowed such a love and affection as is only felt by children—such an affection, as we read in the charming fairy-book, uncouth Orson had for splendid young Valentine his conqueror. He flung himself down at little Osborne's feet, and loved him. Even before they were acquainted, he had admired Osborne in secret. Now he was his valet, his dog, his man Friday. He believed Osborne to be the possessor of every perfection, to be the handsomest, the bravest, the most active, the cleverest, the most generous of created boys. He shared his money with him: bought him uncountable presents of knives, pencil-cases, gold seals, toffee, Little Warblers, and romantic books, with large coloured pictures of knights and robbers, in many of which latter you might read inscriptions to George Sedley Osborne, Esquire, from his attached friend William Dobbin—the which tokens of homage George received very graciously, as became his superior merit.

So that when Lieutenant Osborne, coming to Russell Square on the day of the Vauxhall party, said to the ladies, "Mrs. Sedley, Ma'am, I hope you have room; I've asked Dobbin of ours to come and dine here, and go with us to Vauxhall. He's almost as modest as Jos."

"Modesty! pooh," said the stout gentleman, casting a *vainqueur* look at Miss Sharp.

"He is—but you are incomparably more graceful, Sedley," Osborne added, laughing. "I met him at the Bedford, when I went to look for you; and I told him that Miss Amelia was come home, and that we were all bent on going out for a night's pleasuring; and that Mrs. Sedley had

forgiven his breaking the punch-bowl at the child's party. Don't you remember the catastrophe, Ma'am, seven years ago?"

"Over Mrs. Flamingo's crimson silk gown," said good-natured Mrs. Sedley. "What a gawky it was! And his sisters are not much more graceful. Lady Dobbin was at Highbury last night with three of them. Such figures! my dears."

"The Alderman's very rich, isn't he?" Osborne said archly. "Don't you think one of the daughters would be a good spec for me, Ma'am?"

"You foolish creature! Who would take *you*, I should like to know, with your yellow face? And what can Alderman Dobbin have amongst fourteen?"

"Mine a yellow face? Stop till you see Dobbin. Why, he had the yellow fever three times; twice at Nassau, and once at St. Kitts."

"Well, well; yours is quite yellow enough for us. Isn't it, Emmy?" Mrs. Sedley said: at which speech Miss Amelia only made a smile and a blush; and looking at Mr. George Osborne's pale interesting countenance, and those beautiful black, curling, shining whiskers, which the young gentleman himself regarded with no ordinary complacency, she thought in her little heart, that in His Majesty's army, or in the wide world, there never was such a face or such a hero. "I don't care about Captain Dobbin's complexion," she said, "or about his awkwardness. *I* shall always like him, I know;" her little reason being, that he was the friend and champion of George.

"There's not a finer fellow in the service," Osborne said, "nor a better officer, though he is not an Adonis, certainly." And he looked towards the glass himself with much *naïveté;* and in so doing, caught Miss Sharp's eye fixed keenly upon him, at which he blushed a little, and Rebecca thought in her heart, '*Ah, mon beau Monsieur!* I think I have *your* gage' —the little artful minx!

That evening, when Amelia came tripping into the drawing-room in a white muslin frock, prepared for conquest at Vauxhall, singing like a lark, and as fresh as a rose—a very tall ungainly gentleman, with large hands and feet, and large ears, set off by a closely cropped head of black hair, and in the hideous military frogged coat and cocked-hat of those times, advanced to meet her, and made her one of the clumsiest bows that was ever performed by a mortal.

This was no other than Captain William Dobbin, of His Majesty's—— Regiment of Foot, returned from yellow fever, in the West Indies, to which the fortune of the service had ordered his regiment, whilst so many of his gallant comrades were reaping glory in the Peninsula.

He had arrived with a knock so very timid and quiet, that it was inaudible to the ladies upstairs: otherwise, you may be sure Miss Amelia would never have been so bold as to come singing into the room. As it was, the sweet fresh little voice went right into the Captain's heart, and nestled there. When she held out her hand for him to shake, before he enveloped it in his own, he paused, and thought—"Well, is it possible—are you the little maid I remember in the pink frock, such a short time ago—the night I upset the punchbowl, just after I was gazetted. Are you the little girl that George Osborne said should marry him? What a blooming

young creature you seem, and what a prize the rogue has got!" All this he thought, before he took Amelia's hand into his own, and as he let his cocked-hat fall.

His history since he left school, until the very moment when we have the pleasure of meeting him again, although not fully narrated, has yet, I think, been indicated sufficiently for an ingenious reader by the conversation in the last page. Dobbin, the despised grocer, was Alderman Dobbin—Alderman Dobbin was Colonel of the City Light Horse, then burning with military ardour to resist the French Invasion. Colonel Dobbin's corps, in which old Mr. Osborne himself was but an indifferent corporal, had been reviewed by the Sovereign and the Duke of York; and the colonel and alderman had been knighted. His son had entered the army: and young Osborne followed presently in the same regiment. They had served in the West Indies and in Canada. Their regiment had just come home, and the attachment of Dobbin to George Osborne was as warm and generous now, as it had been, when the two were schoolboys.

So these worthy people sat down to dinner presently. They talked about war and glory, and Boney and Lord Wellington, and the last Gazette. In those famous days every gazette had a victory in it, and the

two gallant young men longed to see their own names in the glorious list, and cursed their unlucky fate to belong to a regiment which had been away from the chances of honour. Miss Sharp kindled with this exciting talk, but Miss Sedley trembled and grew quite faint as she heard it. Mr. Jos told several of his tiger-hunting stories, finished the one about Miss Cutler and Lance the surgeon: helped Rebecca to everything on the table, and himself gobbled and drank a great deal.

He sprang to open the door for the ladies, when they retired, with the most killing grace—and coming back to the table, filled himself bumper after bumper of claret, which he swallowed with nervous rapidity.

"He 's priming himself," Osborne whispered to Dobbin, and at length the hour and the carriage arrived for Vauxhall.

CHAPTER VI.

VAUXHALL.

I KNOW that the tune I am piping is a very mild one, (although there are some terrific chapters coming presently) and must beg the good-natured reader to remember, that we are only discoursing at present, about a stock-broker's family in Russell-square, who are taking walks, or luncheon, or dinner, or talking and making love as people do in common life, and without a single passionate and wonderful incident to mark the progress of their loves. The argument stands thus—Osborne in love with Amelia, has asked an old friend to dinner and to Vauxhall—Jos Sedley is in love with Rebecca. Will he marry her? That is the great subject now in hand.

We might have treated this subject in the genteel, or in the romantic, or in the facetious manner. Suppose we had laid the scene in Grosvenor-square, with the very same adventures—would not some people have listened? Suppose we had shown how Lord Joseph Sedley fell in love, and the Marquis of Osborne became attached to Lady Amelia, with the full consent of the Duke, her noble father: or instead of the supremely genteel, suppose we had resorted to the entirely low, and described what was going on in Mr. Sedley's kitchen;—how black Sambo was in love with the cook, (as indeed he was), and how he fought a battle with the coachman in her behalf; how the knife-boy was caught stealing a cold shoulder of mutton, and Miss Sedley's new *femme de chambre* refused to go to bed without a wax candle; such incidents might be made to provoke much delightful laughter, and be supposed to represent scenes of "life." Or if, on the contrary, we had taken a fancy for the terrible, and made the lover of the new *femme de chambre* a professional burglar, who bursts into the house with his band, slaughters black Sambo at the feet of his master, and carries off Amelia in her night-dress, not to be let loose again till the third volume, we should easily have constructed a tale of thrilling interest, through the fiery chapters of which the reader should hurry, panting. Fancy this chapter having been headed

THE NIGHT ATTACK.

The night was dark and wild—the clouds black—black—ink-black. The wild wind tore the chimney-pots from the roofs of the old houses and sent the tiles whirling and crashing through the desolate streets. No soul braved that tempest—the watchmen shrank into their boxes, whither the searching rain followed them—where the crashing thunderbolt fell and destroyed them—one had so been slain opposite the Foundling. A scorched gaberdine, a shivered lantern, a staff rent in twain by the flash, were all that

remained of stout Will Steadfast. A hackney coachman had been blown off his coach-box, in Southampton Row—and whither? But the whirlwind tells no tidings of its victim, save his parting scream as he is borne onwards! Horrible night! It was dark, pitch dark; no moon, No, no. No moon. Not a star. Not a little feeble, twinkling, solitary star. There had been one at early evening, but he showed his face, shuddering, for a moment in the black heaven, and then retreated back.

One, two, three! It is the signal that Black Vizard had agreed on.

"Mofy! is that your snum?" said a voice from the area. "I'll gully the dag and bimbole the clicky in a snuffkin."

"Nuffle your clod, and beladle your glumbanions," said Vizard, with a dreadful oath. "This way, men; if they screak, out with your snickers and slick! Look to the pewter room, Blowser. You, Mark, to the old gaff's mopus box! and I," added he, in a lower but more horrible voice, "I will look to Amelia!"

There was a dead silence. "Ha!" said Vizard, "was that the click of a pistol?"

Or suppose we adopted the genteel rose-water style. The Marquis of Osborne has just despatched his *petit tigre* with a *billet-doux* to the Lady Amelia.

The dear creature has received it from the hands of her *femme de chambre*, Mademoiselle Anastasie.

Dear Marquis! what amiable politeness! His lordship's note contains the wished-for invitation to Devonshire House!

"Who is that monstrous fine girl," said the *Semillant* Prince G—rge of C—mbr—dge, at a mansion in Piccadilly the same evening (having just arrived from the omnibus at the opera.) "My dear Sedley, in the name of all the Cupids, introduce me to her!"

"Her name, *Monseigneur*," said Lord Joseph, bowing gravely, "is Sedley."

"*Vous avez alors un bien beau nom*," said the young Prince, turning on his heel rather disappointed, and treading on the foot of an old gentleman who stood behind, in deep admiration of the beautiful Lady Amelia.

"*Trent emille tonnerres!*" shouted the victim, writhing under the *agonie du moment.*

"I beg a thousand pardons of your Grace," said the young *étourdi*, blushing, and bending low his fair curls. He had trodden on the toe of the great Captain of the age!

"Oh, Devonshire!" cried the young Prince, to a tall and good-natured nobleman, whose features proclaimed him of the blood of the Cavendishes. "A word with you! Have you still a mind to part with your diamond necklace?"

"I have sold it for two hundred and fifty thousand pounds, to Prince Easterhazy here."

"*Und das war gar nicht theuer, potztausend!*" exclaimed the princely Hungarian, &c., &c., &c. . . . . .

Thus you see, ladies, how this story *might* have been written, if the author had but a mind; for, to tell the truth, he is just as familiar with Newgate as with the palaces of our revered aristocracy, and has seen the outside of both. But as I don't understand the language or manners of the Rookery, nor that polyglot conversation which, according to the fashionable novelists, is spoken by the leaders of *ton;* we must, if you please, preserve our middle course modestly, amidst those scenes and personages

with which we are most familiar. In a word, this chapter about Vauxhall would have been so exceeding short but for the above little disquisition, that it scarcely would have deserved to be called a chapter at all. And yet it is a chapter, and a very important one too. Are not there little chapters in everybody's life, that seem to be nothing, and yet affect all the rest of the history?

Let us then step into the coach with the Russell-square party, and be off to the Gardens. There is barely room between Jos and Miss Sharp, who are on the front seat. Mr. Osborne sitting bodkin opposite, between Captain Dobbin and Amelia.

Every soul in the coach agreed, that on that night, Jos would propose to make Rebecca Sharp Mrs. Sedley. The parents at home had acquiesced in the arrangement, though, between ourselves, old Mr. Sedley had a feeling very much akin to contempt for his son. He said he was vain, selfish, lazy, and effeminate. He could not endure his airs as a man of fashion, and laughed heartily at his pompous braggadocio stories. "I shall leave the fellow half my property," he said; "and he will have, besides, plenty of his own; but as I am perfectly sure that if you, and I, and his sister were to die to-morrow he would say 'Good Gad!' and eat his dinner just as well as usual, I am not going to make myself anxious about him. Let him marry whom he likes. It 's no affair of mine."

Amelia, on the other hand, as became a young woman of her prudence and temperament, was quite enthusiastic for the match. Once or twice Jos had been on the point of saying something very important to her, to which she was most willing to lend an ear, but the fat fellow could not be brought to unbosom himself of his great secret, and very much to his sister's disappointment he only rid himself of a large sigh and turned away.

This mystery served to keep Amelia's gentle bosom in a perpetual flutter of excitement. If she did not speak with Rebecca on the tender subject, she compensated herself with long and intimate conversations with Mrs. Blenkinsop, the housekeeper, who dropped some hints to the lady's-maid, who may have cursorily mentioned it to the cook, who carried the news, I have no doubt, to all the tradesmen, so that Mr. Jos's marriage was now talked off by a very considerable number of persons in the Russell-square world.

It was, of course, Mrs. Sedley's opinion that her son would demean himself by a marriage with an artist's daughter. "But, lor', Ma'am," ejaculated Mrs. Blenkinsop, "we was only grocers when we married Mr. S., who was a stock-broker's clerk, and we hadn't five hundred pounds among us, and we're rich enough now." And Amelia was entirely of this opinion, to which, gradually, the good-natured Mrs. Sedley was brought.

Mr. Sedley was neutral. "Let Jos marry whom he likes," he said; "it 's no affair of mine. This girl has no fortune; no more had Mrs. Sedley. She seems good-humoured and clever, and will keep him in order, perhaps. Better she, my dear, than a black Mrs. Sedley, and a dozen of mahogany grandchildren."

So that everything seemed to smile upon Rebecca's fortunes. She took Jos's arm, as a matter of course, on going to dinner; she had sate by him

on the box of his open carriage (a most tremendous "buck" he was, as he sat there, serene, in state, driving his greys), and though nobody said a word on the subject of the marriage, everybody seemed to understand it. All she wanted was the proposal, and ah! how Rebecca now felt the want of a mother!—a dear tender mother, who would have managed the business in ten minutes, and, in the course of a little delicate confidential conversation, would have extracted the interesting avowal from the bashful lips of the young man!

Such was the state of affairs as the carriage crossed Westminster-bridge.

The party was landed at the Royal Gardens in due time. As the majestic Jos stepped out of the creaking vehicle the crowd gave a cheer for the fat gentleman, who blushed and looked very big and mighty, as he walked away with Rebecca under his arm. George, of course, took charge of Amelia. She looked as happy as a rose-tree in sunshine.

"I say, Dobbin," says George, "just look to the shawls and things, there 's a good fellow." And so while he paired off with Miss Sedley, and Jos squeezed through the gate into the Gardens with Rebecca at his side, honest Dobbin contented himself by giving an arm to the shawls, and by paying at the door for the whole party.

He walked very modestly behind them. He was not willing to spoil sport. About Rebecca and Jos he did not care a fig. But he thought Amelia worthy even of the brilliant George Osborne, and as he saw that good-looking couple, threading the walks to the girl's delight and wonder, he watched her artless happiness with a sort of fatherly pleasure. Perhaps he felt that he would have liked to have something on his own arm besides a shawl (the people laughed at seeing the gawky young officer carrying this female burthen); but William Dobbin was very little addicted to selfish calculation at all; and so long as his friend was enjoying himself, how should he be discontented? And the truth is, that of all the delights of the Gardens; of the hundred thousand *extra* lamps, which were always lighted; the fiddlers, in cocked hats, who played ravishing melodies under the gilded cockle-shell in the midst of the gardens; the singers, both of comic and sentimental ballads, who charmed the ears there; the country dances, formed by bouncing cockneys and cockneyesses, and executed amidst jumping, thumping, and laughter; the signal which announced that Madame Saqui was about to mount skyward on a slack-rope ascending to the stars; the hermit that always sat in the illuminated hermitage; the dark walks, so favourable to the interviews of young lovers; the pots of stout handed about by the people in the shabby old liveries; and the twinkling boxes, in which the happy feasters made-believe to eat slices of almost invisible ham;—of all these things, and of the gentle Simpson, that kind smiling idiot, who, I daresay, presided even then over the place—Captain William Dobbin did not take the slightest notice.

He carried about Amelia's white cashmere shawl, and having attended under the gilt cockle shell, while Mrs. Salmon performed the Battle of Borodino, (a savage Cantata against the Corsican upstart, who had lately met with his Russian reverses)—Mr. Dobbin tried to hum it as he walked away, and found he was humming—the tune which Amelia Sedley sang on the stairs, as she came down to dinner.

He burst out laughing at himself; for the truth is, he could sing no better than an owl.

It is to be understood, as a matter of course, that our young people, being in parties of two and two, made the most solemn promises to keep together during the evening, and separated in ten minutes afterwards. Parties at Vauxhall always did separate, but 'twas only to meet again at supper-time, when they could talk of their mutual adventures in the interval.

What were the adventures of Mr. Osborne and Miss Amelia? That is a secret. But be sure of this—they were perfectly happy, and correct in their behaviour; and as they had been in the habit of being together anytime these fifteen years, their *tête-à-tête* offered no particular novelty.

But when Miss Rebecca Sharp and her stout companion lost themselves

in a solitary walk, in which there were not above five score more of couples similarly straying, they both felt that the situation was extremely tender and critical, and now or never was the moment, Miss Sharp thought, to provoke that declaration which was trembling on the timid lips of Mr. Sedley. They had previously been to the panorama of Moscow, where a rude fellow, treading on Miss Sharp's foot, caused her to fall back with a little shriek into the arms of Mr. Sedley, and this little incident increased

the tenderness and confidence of that gentleman to such a degree, that he told her several of his favourite Indian stories over again for, at least, the sixth time.

"How I should like to see India!" said Rebecca.

"*Should* you?" said Joseph, with a most killing tenderness; and was no doubt about to follow up this artful interrogatory by a question still more tender (for he puffed and panted a great deal, and Rebecca's hand, which was placed near his heart, could count the feverish pulsations of that organ), when, oh, provoking! the bell rang for the fireworks, and, a great scuffling and running taking place, these interesting lovers were obliged to follow in the stream of people.

Captain Dobbin had some thoughts of joining the party at supper: as, in truth, he found the Vauxhall amusement not particularly lively—but he paraded twice before the box where the now united couples were met, and nobody took any notice of him. Covers were laid for four. The mated pairs were prattling away quite happily, and Dobbin knew he was as clean forgotten as if he had never existed in this world.

"I should only be *de trop*," said the Captain, looking at them rather wistfully. "I'd best go and talk to the hermit,"—and so he strolled off out of the hum of men, and noise, and clatter of the banquet, into the dark walk, at the end of which lived that well-known pasteboard Solitary. It wasn't very good fun for Dobbin—and, indeed, to be alone at Vauxhall, I have found, from my own experience, to be one of the most dismal sports ever entered into by a bachelor.

The two couples were perfectly happy then in their box: where the most delightful and intimate conversation took place. Jos was in his glory, ordering about the waiters with great majesty. He made the salad; and uncorked the Champagne; and carved the chickens; and ate and drank the greater part of the refreshments on the tables. Finally, he insisted upon having a bowl of rack punch; everybody had rack punch at Vauxhall. "Waiter, rack punch."

That bowl of rack punch was the cause of all this history. And why not a bowl of rack punch as well as any other cause? Was not a bowl of prussic acid the cause of fair Rosamond's retiring from the world? Was not a bowl of wine the cause of the demise of Alexander the Great, or at least, does not Dr. Lempriere say so?—so did this bowl of rack punch influence the fates of all the principal characters in this "Novel without a Hero," which we are now relating. It influenced their life, although most of them did not taste a drop of it.

The young ladies did not drink it; Osborne did not like it; and the consequence was that Jos, that fat *gourmand*, drank up the whole contents of the bowl; and the consequence of his drinking up the whole contents of the bowl was, a liveliness which at first was astonishing, and then became almost painful; for he talked and laughed so loud as to bring scores of listeners round the box, much to the confusion of the innocent party within it; and, volunteering to sing a song (which he did in that maudlin high-key peculiar to gentlemen in an inebriated state), he almost drew away the audience who were gathered round the musicians

in the gilt scollop-shell, and received from his hearers a great deal of applause.

"Brayvo, Fat un!" said one; "Angcore, Daniel Lambert!" said another; "What a figure for the tight-rope!" exclaimed another wag, to the inexpressible alarm of the ladies, and the great anger of Mr. Osborne.

"For Heaven's sake, Jos, let us get up and go," cried that gentleman, and the young women rose.

"Stop, my dearest diddle-diddle-darling," shouted Jos, now as bold as a lion, and clasping Miss Rebecca round the waist. Rebecca started, but she could not get away her hand. The laughter outside redoubled. Jos continued to drink, to make love, and to sing; and, winking and waving his glass gracefully to his audience, challenged all or any to come in and take a share of his punch.

Mr. Osborne was just on the point of knocking down a gentleman in top-boots, who proposed to take advantage of this invitation, and a commotion seemed to be inevitable, when by the greatest good luck a gentleman of the name of Dobbin, who had been walking about the gardens, stepped up to the box. "Be off, you foolth!" said this gentleman—shouldering off a great number of the crowd, who vanished presently before his cocked hat and fierce appearance—and he entered the box in a most agitated state.

"Good Heavens! Dobbin, where *have* you been?" Osborne said, seizing the white cashmere shawl from his friend's arm, and huddling up Amelia in it.—"Make yourself useful, and take charge of Jos here, whilst I take the ladies to the carriage."

Jos was for rising to interfere—but a single push from Osborne's finger sent him puffing back into his seat again, and the lieutenant was enabled to remove the ladies in safety. Jos kissed his hand to them as they retreated, and hiccupped out Bless you! Bless you! Then seizing Captain Dobbin's hand, and weeping in the most pitiful way, he confided to that gentleman the secret of his loves. He adored that girl who had just gone out; he had broken her heart, he knew he had, by his conduct; he would marry her next morning at St. George's Hanover Square; he 'd knock up the Archbishop of Canterbury at Lambeth: he would, by Jove! and have him in readiness; and, acting on this hint, Captain Dobbin shrewdly induced him to leave the gardens and hasten to Lambeth palace, and, when once out of the gates, easily conveyed this fat bacchanalian into a hackney-coach, which deposited him safely at his lodgings.

George Osborne conducted the girls home in safety: and when the door was closed upon them, and as he walked across Russell-square, laughed so as to astonish the watchman. Amelia looked very ruefully at her friend, as they went up-stairs, and kissed her, and went to bed without any more talking.

"He must propose to-morrow," thought Rebecca. "He called me his soul's darling, four times; he squeezed my hand in Amelia's presence. He must propose, to-morrow." And so thought Amelia, too. And I dare say she thought of the dress she was to wear as bride's-maid, and of the

presents which she should make to her nice little sister-in-law, and of a subsequent ceremony in which she herself might play a principal part, &c., and &c., and &c., and &c.

Oh, ignorant young creatures! How little do you know the effect of rack-punch! What is the rack in the punch, at night, to the rack in the head of a morning? To this truth I can vouch as a man; there is no headache in the world like that caused by Vauxhall punch. Through the lapse of twenty years, I can remember the consequence of two glasses!—two wine-glasses!—but two, upon the honour of a gentleman; and Joseph Sedley, who had a liver complaint, had swallowed at least a quart of the abominable mixture.

That next morning, which Rebecca thought was to dawn upon her fortune, found Sedley groaning in agonies which the pen refuses to describe.

Soda-water was not invented yet. Small beer—will it be believed!—was the only drink with which unhappy gentlemen soothed the fever of their previous night's potation. With this mild beverage before him, George Osborne found the ex-collector of Boggleywollah groaning on the sofa at his lodgings. Dobbin was already in the room, good-naturedly tending his patient of the night before. The two officers looking at the prostrate Bacchanalian, and askance at each other, exchanged the most frightful sympathetic grins. Even Sedley's valet, the most solemn and correct of gentlemen, with the muteness and gravity of an undertaker, could hardly keep his countenance in order, as he looked at his unfortunate master.

"Mr. Sedley was uncommon wild last night, sir," he whispered in confidence to Osborne, as the latter mounted the stair. "He wanted to fight the 'ackney-coachman, sir. The Capting was obliged to bring him up stairs in his harms like a babby." A momentary smile flickered over Mr. Brush's features as he spoke; instantly, however, they relapsed into their usual unfathomable calm, as he flung open the drawing-room door, and announced "Mr. Hosbin."

"How are you, Sedley?" that young wag began, after surveying his

victim. "No bones broke? There 's a hackney-coachman down stairs with a black eye, and a tied up head, vowing he 'll have the law of you."

"What do you mean,—law?" Sedley faintly asked.

"For thrashing him last night—didn't he, Dobbin? You hit out, sir, like Molyneux. The watchman says he never saw a fellow go down so straight. Ask Dobbin."

"You *did* have a round with the coachman," Captain Dobbin said, "and showed plenty of fight too."

"And that fellow with the white coat at Vauxhall! How Jos drove at him! How the women screamed! By Jove, sir, it did my heart good to see you. I thought you civilians had no pluck; but *I 'll* never get in your way when you are in your cups, Jos."

"I believe I 'm very terrible, when I 'm roused," ejaculated Jos from the sofa, and made a grimace so dreary and ludicrous, that the Captain's politeness could restrain him no longer, and he and Osborne fired off a ringing volley of laughter.

Osborne pursued his advantage pitilessly. He thought Jos a milksop. He had been revolving in his mind the marriage-question pending between Jos and Rebecca, and was not over-well pleased that a member of a family into which he, George Osborne, of the —th, was going to marry, should make a *mésalliance* with a little nobody—a little upstart governess. "You hit, you poor old fellow?" said Osborne. "You terrible? Why, man, you couldn't stand—you made everybody laugh in the Gardens, though you were crying yourself. You were maudlin, Jos. Don't you remember singing a song?"

"A what?" Jos asked.

"A sentimental song, and calling Rosa, Rebecca, what's her name, Amelia's little friend—your dearest diddle, diddle, darling?" And this ruthless young fellow, seizing hold of Dobbin's hand, acted over the scene, to the horror of the original performer, and in spite of Dobbin's good-natured entreaties to him to have mercy.

"Why should I spare him?" Osborne said to his friend's remonstrances, when they quitted the invalid, leaving him under the hands of Doctor Glauber. "What the deuce right has he to give himself his patronizing airs, and make fools of us at Vauxhall? Who 's this little school-girl that is ogling and making love to him? Hang it, the family 's low enough already, without *her*. A governess is all very well, but I 'd rather have a lady for my sister-in-law. I 'm a liberal man; but I 've proper pride, and know my own station: let her know hers. And I 'll take down that great hectoring Nabob, and prevent him from being made a greater fool than he is. That 's why I told him to look out, lest she brought an action against him."

"I suppose you know best," Dobbin said, though rather dubiously. "You always were a Tory, and your family 's one of the oldest in England. But," ——

"Come and see the girls, and make love to Miss Sharp yourself," the lieutenant here interrupted his friend; but Captain Dobbin declined to join Osborne in his daily visit to the young ladies in Russell Square.

As he walked down Southampton Row, from Holborn, he laughed as

he saw, at the Sedley Mansion, in two different stories, two heads on the look-out.

The fact is, Miss Amelia, in the drawing-room balcony, was looking very eagerly towards the opposite side of the Square, where Mr. Osborne dwelt, on the watch for the lieutenant himself; and Miss Sharp, from her little bed-room on the second-floor, was in observation until Mr. Joseph's great form should heave in sight.

"Sister Anne is on the watch-tower," said he to Amelia, "but there's nobody coming;" and laughing and enjoying the joke hugely, he described in the most ludicrous terms to Miss Sedley, the dismal condition of her brother.

"I think it's very cruel of you to laugh, George," she said, looking particularly unhappy; but George only laughed the more at her piteous and discomfited mien, persisted in thinking the joke a most diverting one, and when Miss Sharp came down stairs, bantered her with a great deal of liveliness upon the effect of her charms on the fat civilian.

"O Miss Sharp! if you could but see him this morning," he said—"moaning in his flowered dressing-gown—writhing on his sofa; if you could but have seen him lolling out his tongue to Glauber the apothecary."

"See whom?" said Miss Sharp.

"Whom? O whom? Captain Dobbin, of course, to whom we were all so attentive, by the way, last night."

"We were very unkind to him," Emmy said, blushing very much. "I—I quite forgot him."

"Of course you did," cried Osborne, still on the laugh. "One can't be *always* thinking about Dobbin, you know, Amelia. Can one, Miss Sharp?"

"Except when he overset the glass of wine at dinner," Miss Sharp said, with a haughty air and a toss of the head, "I never gave the existence of Captain Dobbin one single moment's consideration."

"Very good, Miss Sharp, I'll tell him," Osborne said; and as he spoke Miss Sharp began to have a feeling of distrust and hatred towards this young officer, which he was quite unconscious of having inspired. "*He* is to make fun of me, is he?" thought Rebecca. "Has he been laughing about me to Joseph? Has he frightened him? Perhaps he won't come."—A film passed over her eyes, and her heart beat quite thick.

"You're always joking," said she, smiling as innocently as she could. "Joke away, Mr. George; there's nobody to defend *me*." And George Osborne, as she walked away—and Amelia looked reprovingly at him—felt some little manly compunction for having inflicted any unnecessary unkindness upon this helpless creature. "My dearest Amelia," said he, "you are too good—too kind. You don't know the world. I do. And your little friend Miss Sharp must learn her station."

"Don't you think Jos will—"

"Upon my word, my dear, I don't know. He may, or may not. I'm not his master. I only know he is a very foolish vain fellow, and put my dear little girl into a very painful and awkward position last night. My dearest diddle—diddle—darling!" He was off laughing again; and he did it so drolly that Emmy laughed too.

All that day Jos never came. But Amelia had no fear about this; for the little schemer had actually sent away the page, Mr. Sambo's aide-de-camp, to Mr. Joseph's lodgings, to ask for some book he had promised, and how he was; and the reply through Jos's man, Mr. Brush, was, that his master was ill in bed, and had just had the doctor with him. He must come to-morrow, she thought, but she never had the courage to speak a word on the subject to Rebecca; nor did that young woman herself allude to it in any way during the whole evening after the night at Vauxhall.

The next day, however, as the two young ladies sate on the sofa, pretending to work, or to write letters, or to read novels, Sambo came into the room with his usual engaging grin, with a packet under his arm, and a note on a tray. "Note from Mr. Jos, Miss," says Sambo.

How Amelia trembled as she opened it!

So it ran:—

"Dear Amelia,—I send you the Orphan of the Forest. I was too ill to come yesterday. I leave town to-day for Cheltenham. Pray excuse me, if you can, to the amiable Miss Sharp, for my conduct at Vauxhall, and entreat her to pardon and forget every word I may have uttered when excited by that fatal supper. As soon as I have recovered, for my health is very much shaken, I shall go to Scotland for some months, and am

"Truly yours,

"Jos. Sedley."

It was the death-warrant. All was over. Amelia did not dare to look at Rebecca's pale face and burning eyes, but she dropt the letter into her friend's lap; and got up, and went upstairs to her room, and cried her little heart out.

Blenkinsop, the housekeeper, there sought her presently with consolation; on whose shoulder Amelia wept confidentially, and relieved herself a good deal. "Don't take on, Miss. I didn't like to tell you. But none of us in the house have liked her except at fust. I sor her with my own eyes reading your Ma's letters. Pinner says she 's always about your trinket-box and drawers, and everybody's drawers, and she 's sure she 's put your white ribbing into her box."

"I gave it her, I gave it her," Amelia said.

But this did not alter Mrs. Blenkinsop's opinion of Miss Sharp. "I don't trust them governesses, Pinner, they 're neither one thing nor t'other. They give themselves the hairs and hupstarts of ladies, and their wages is no better than you nor me."

It now became clear to every soul in the house, except poor Amelia, that Rebecca should take her departure, and high and low (always with the one exception) agreed that that event should take place as speedily as possible. Our good child ransacked all her drawers, cupboards, reticules, and gimcrack boxes—passed in review all her gowns, fichus, tags, bobbins, laces, silk stockings, and fallals—selecting this thing and that and the other, to make a little heap for Rebecca. And going to her Papa, that generous British merchant, who had promised to give her as many guineas as she was years old—she begged the old gentleman to give the money to dear Rebecca, who must want it, while she lacked for nothing.

She even made George Osborne contribute, and nothing loth (for he was as free-handed a young fellow as any in the army), he went to Bond Street, and bought the best hat and spencer that money could buy.

"That 's George's present to you, Rebecca, dear," said Amelia, quite proud of the bandbox conveying these gifts.* "What a taste he has! There 's nobody like him."

"Nobody," Rebecca answered. "How thankful I am to him!" She was thinking in her heart, "It was George Osborne who prevented my marriage.—And she loved George Osborne accordingly.

She made her preparations for departure with great equanimity; and accepted all the kind little Amelia's presents, after just the proper degree of hesitation and reluctance. She vowed eternal gratitude to Mrs. Sedley, of course; but did not intrude herself upon that good lady too much, who was embarrassed, and evidently wishing to avoid her. She kissed Mr. Sedley's hand, when he presented her with the purse; and asked permission to consider him for the future as her kind, kind friend and protector. Her behaviour was so affecting that he was going to write her a checque for twenty pounds more; but he restrained his feelings: the carriage was in waiting to take him to dinner: so he tripped away with a "God bless you, my dear. Always come here when you come to town, you know.—Drive to the Mansion House, James."

* It was the author's intention, faithful to history, to depict all the characters of this tale in their proper costumes, as they wore them at the commencement of the century.

Finally came the parting with Miss Amelia, over which picture I intend to throw a veil. But after a scene in which one person was in earnest and the other a perfect performer—after the tenderest caresses, the most pathetic tears, the smelling-bottle, and some of the very best feelings of the heart, had been called into requisition—Rebecca and Amelia parted, the former vowing to love her friend for ever and ever and ever.

But when I remember the appearance of people in those days, and that an officer and lady were actually habited like this—

I have not the heart to disfigure my heroes and heroines by costumes so hideous; and have, on the contrary, engaged a model of rank dressed according to the present fashion.

CHAPTER VII.

CRAWLEY OF QUEEN'S CRAWLEY.

MONG the most respected of the names beginning in C, which the Court-Guide contained, in the year 18—, was that of Crawley, Sir Pitt, Baronet, Great Gaunt Street, and Queen's Crawley, Hants. This honourable name had figured constantly also in the Parliamentary list for many years, in conjunction with that of a number of other worthy gentlemen who sat in turns for the borough.

It is related, with regard to the borough of Queen's Crawley, that Queen Elizabeth in one of her progresses, stopping at Crawley to breakfast, was so delighted with some remarkably fine Hampshire beer which was then presented to her by the Crawley of the day (a handsome gentleman with a trim beard and a good leg), that she forthwith erected Crawley into a borough to send two members to Parliament; and the place, from the day of that illustrious visit, took the name of Queen's Crawley, which it holds up to the present moment. And though by the lapse of time, and those mutations which ages produce in empires, cities, and boroughs, Queen's Crawley was no longer so populous a place as it had been in Queen Bess's time—nay, was come down to that condition of borough which used to be denominated rotten—yet, as Sir Pitt Crawley would say with perfect justice in his elegant way, "Rotten! be hanged—it produces me a good fifteen hundred a year."

Sir Pitt Crawley (named after the great Commoner), was the son of Walpole Crawley, first Baronet, of the Tape and Sealing-Wax Office in the reign of George II., when he was impeached for peculation, as were a great number of other honest gentlemen of those days; and Walpole Crawley was, as need scarcely be said, son of John Churchill Crawley, named after the celebrated military commander of the reign of Queen Anne. The family tree (which hangs up at Queen's Crawley),

furthermore mentions Charles Stuart, afterwards called Barebones Crawley's son, the Crawley of James the First's time, and finally, Queen Elizabeth's Crawley, who is represented as the foreground of the picture in his forked beard and armour. Out of his waistcoat, as usual, grows a tree, on the main branches of which the above illustrious names are inscribed. Close by the name of Sir Pitt Crawley, Baronet (the subject of the present memoir), are written that of his brother, the Reverend Bute Crawley (the great Commoner was in disgrace when the reverend gentleman was born), rector of Crawley-cum-Snailby, and of various other male and female members of the Crawley family.

Sir Pitt was first married to Grizzel, sixth daughter of Mungo Binkie, Lord Binkie, and cousin, in consequence of Mr. Dundas. She brought him two sons: Pitt, named not so much after his father as after the heaven-born minister; and Rawdon Crawley, from the Prince of Wales's friend, whom his Majesty George IV. forgot so completely. Many years after her ladyship's demise, Sir Pitt led to the altar Rosa, daughter of Mr. G. Grafton of Mudbury, by whom he had two daughters, for whose benefit Miss Rebecca Sharp was now engaged as governess. It will be seen that the young lady was come into a family of very genteel connexions, and was about to move in a much more distinguished circle than that humble one which she had just quitted in Russell Square.

She had received her orders to join her pupils, in a note which was written upon an old envelope, and which contained the following words:—

"Sir Pitt Crawley begs Miss Sharp and baggidge may be hear on Tuesday, as I leaf for Queen's Crawley to-morrow morning *erly*.

"Great Gaunt Street."

Rebecca had never seen a Baronet, as far as she knew, and as soon as she had taken leave of Amelia, and counted the guineas which good-natured Mr. Sedley had put into a purse for her, and as soon as she had done wiping her eyes with her handkerchief (which operation she concluded the very moment the carriage had turned the corner of the street), she began to depict in her own mind what a baronet must be. "I wonder, does he wear a star?" thought she, "or is it only lords that wear stars? But he will be very handsomely dressed in a court suit, with ruffles and his hair a little powdered, like Mr. Wroughton at Covent Garden. I suppose he will be awfully proud, and that I shall be treated most contemptuously. Still I must bear my hard lot as well as I can—at least, I shall be amongst *gentlefolks*, and not with vulgar city people:" and she fell to thinking of her Russell Square friends with that very same philosophical bitterness with which, in a certain apologue, the fox is represented as speaking of the grapes.

Having passed through Shiverly Square into Great Gaunt Street, the carriage at length stopped at a tall gloomy house between two other tall gloomy houses, each with a hatchment over the middle drawing-room window; as is the custom of houses in Great Gaunt Street, in which gloomy locality death seems to reign perpetual. The shutters of the first floor windows of Sir Pitt's mansion were closed—those of the dining-room were partially open, and the blinds neatly covered up in old newspapers.

John, the groom, who had driven the carriage alone, did not care to descend to ring the bell; and so prayed a passing milk-boy to perform that office for him. When the bell was rung, a head appeared between the interstices of the dining-room shutters, and the door was opened by a man in drab breeches and gaiters, with a dirty old coat, a foul old neck-cloth lashed round his bristly neck, a shining bald head, a leering red face, a pair of twinkling grey eyes, and a mouth perpetually on the grin.

"This Sir Pitt Crawley's?" says John, from the box.

"Ees," says the man at the door, with a nod.

"Hand down these 'ere trunks then," said John.

"Hand 'n down yourself," said the porter.

"Don't you see I can't leave my hosses? Come, bear a hand, my fine feller, and Miss will give you some beer," said John, with a horse-laugh, for he was no longer respectful to Miss Sharp, as her connexion with the family was broken off, and as she had given nothing to the servants on coming away.

The bald-headed man, taking his hands out of his breeches pockets, advanced on this summons, and throwing Miss Sharp's trunk over his shoulder, carried it into the house.

"Take this basket and shawl, if you please, and open the door," said Miss Sharp, and descended from the carriage in much indignation. "I shall write to Mr. Sedley and inform him of your conduct," said she to the groom.

"Don't," replied that functionary. "I hope you've forgot nothink? Miss 'Melia's gownds—have you got them—as the lady's-maid was to have 'ad? I hope they'll fit you. Shut the door, Jim, you'll get no good out of '*er*," continued John, pointing with his thumb towards Miss Sharp: "a bad lot, I tell you, a bad lot," and so saying, Mr. Sedley's groom drove away. The truth is, he was attached to the lady's-maid in question, and indignant that she should have been robbed of her perquisites.

On entering the dining-room, by the orders of the individual in gaiters, Rebecca found that apartment not more cheerful than such rooms usually are, when genteel families are out of town. The faithful chambers seem, as it were, to mourn the absence of their masters. The turkey carpet has rolled itself up, and retired sulkily under the sideboard: the pictures have hidden their faces behind old sheets of brown paper: the ceiling lamp is muffled up in a dismal sack of brown holland: the window-curtains have disappeared under all sorts of shabby envelopes: the marble bust of Sir Walpole Crawley is looking from its black corner at the bare boards and the oiled fire-irons, and the empty card-racks over the mantel-piece: the cellaret has lurked away behind the carpet: the chairs are turned up heads and tails along the walls: and in the dark corner opposite the statue, is an old-fashioned crabbed knife-box, locked and sitting on a dumb waiter.

Two kitchen chairs, and a round table, and an attenuated old poker and tongs were, however, gathered round the fire-place, as was a saucepan over a feeble sputtering fire. There was a bit of cheese and bread, and a tin candlestick on the table, and a little black porter in a pint-pot.

"Had your dinner? I suppose. It is not too warm for you? Like a drop of beer?"

"Where is Sir Pitt Crawley?" said Miss Sharp majestically.

"He, he! *I* be Sir Pitt Crawley. Reklect you owe me a pint for bringing down your luggage. He, he! Ask Tinker if I baynt. Mrs. Tinker, Miss Sharp; Miss Governess, Mrs. Charwoman. Ho, ho!"

The lady addressed as Mrs. Tinker, at this moment made her appearance with a pipe and a paper of tobacco, for which she had been despatched a minute before Miss Sharp's arrival; and she handed the articles over to Sir Pitt, who had taken his seat by the fire.

"Where 's the farden?" said he. "I gave you three halfpence. Where 's the change? old Tinker."

"There!" replied Mrs. Tinker, flinging down the coin; "it 's only baronets as cares about farthings."

"A farthing a day is seven shillings a year," answered the M.P.; "seven shillings a year is the interest of seven guineas. Take care of your farthings, old Tinker, and your guineas will come quite nat'ral."

"You may be sure it's Sir Pitt Crawley, young woman," said Mrs. Crawley, surlily; "because he looks to his farthings. You'll know him better afore long."

"And like me none the worse, Miss Sharp," said the old gentleman, with an air almost of politeness. "I must be just before I'm generous."

"He never gave away a farthing in his life," growled Tinker.

"Never, and never will: it's against my principle. Go and get another chair from the kitchen, Tinker, if you want to sit down; and then we'll have a bit of supper."

Presently the baronet plunged a fork into the saucepan on the fire, and withdrew from the pot a piece of tripe and an onion, which he divided into pretty equal portions, and of which he partook with Mrs. Tinker. "You see, Miss Sharp, when I'm not here Tinker's on board wages: when I'm in town she dines with the family. Haw! haw! I'm glad Miss Sharp's not hungry, ain't you, Tink?" And they fell to upon their frugal supper.

After supper Sir Pitt Crawley began to smoke his pipe; and when it became quite dark, he lighted the rushlight in the tin candlestick, and producing from an interminable pocket a huge mass of papers, began reading them, and putting them in order.

"I'm here on law business, my dear, and that's how it happens that I shall have the pleasure of such a pretty travelling companion to-morrow."

"He's always at law business," said Mrs. Tinker, taking up the pot of porter.

"Drink and drink about," said the Baronet. "Yes, my dear, Tinker is quite right: I've lost and won more lawsuits than any man in England. Look here at Crawley, Bart. v. Snaffle. I'll throw him over, or my name's not Pitt Crawley. Podder and another versus Crawley, Bart. Overseers of Snaily parish against Crawley, Bart. They can't prove it's common: I'll defy 'em; the land's mine. It no more belongs to the parish than it does to you or Tinker here. I'll beat 'em, if it cost me a thousand guineas. Look over the papers; you may if you like, my dear. Do you write a good hand? I'll make you useful when we're at Queen's Crawley, depend on it Miss Sharp. Now the dowager's dead I want some one."

"She was as bad as he," said Tinker. "She took the law of every one of her tradesmen; and turned away forty-eight footmen in four year."

"She was close—very close," said the orphan, simply; "but she was a valyble woman to me, and saved me a steward."—And in this confidential strain, and much to the amusement of the new-comer, the conversation continued for a considerable time. Whatever Sir Pitt Crawley's qualities might be, good or bad, he did not make the least disguise of them. He talked of himself incessantly, sometimes in the coarsest and vulgarest Hampshire accent; sometimes adopting the tone of a man of the world. And so, with injunctions to Miss Sharp to be ready at five in the morning, he bade her good night. "You'll sleep with Tinker to-night," he said; "It's a big bed, and there's room for two. Lady Crawley died in it. Good night."

Sir Pitt went off after this benediction, and the solemn Tinker, rushlight in hand, led the way up the great bleak stone stairs, past the great dreary drawing-room doors, with the handles muffled up in paper, into the great front bed-room, where Lady Crawley had slept her last. The bed and chamber were so funereal and gloomy, you might have fancied, not only that Lady Crawley died in the room, but that her ghost inhabited it. Rebecca sprang about the apartment, however, with the greatest liveliness, and had peeped into the huge wardrobes, and the closets, and the cupboards,

and tried the drawers which were locked, and examined the dreary pictures and toilette appointments, while the old charwoman was saying her prayers. "I shouldn't like to sleep in this yeer bed without a good conscience, Miss," said the old woman. "There 's room for us and a half-dozen of ghosts in it," says Rebecca. "Tell me all about Lady Crawley and Sir Pitt Crawley, and everybody, my *dear* Mrs. Tinker."

But old Tinker was not to be pumped by this little cross-questioner; and signifying to her that bed was a place for sleeping, not conversation, set up in her corner of the bed such a snore as only the noise of innocence can produce. Rebecca lay awake for a long, long time, thinking of the morrow, and of the new world into which she was going, and of her chances of success there. The rushlight flickered in the basin. The mantel-piece cast up a great black shadow, over half of a mouldy old sampler, which her defunct ladyship had worked, no doubt, and over two little family pictures of young lads, one in a college gown, and the other in a red jacket like a soldier. When she went to sleep, Rebecca chose that one to dream about.

At four o'clock, on such a roseate summer's morning as even made Great Gaunt Street look cheerful, the faithful Tinker, having wakened her bedfellow, and bid her prepare for departure, unbarred and unbolted the great hall door, (the clanging and clapping whereof startled the sleeping echoes in the street), and taking her way into Oxford Street, summoned a coach from a stand there. It is needless to particularize the number of the vehicle, or to state that the driver was stationed thus early in the neighbourhood of Swallow Street, in hopes that some young buck, reeling homeward from the tavern, might need the aid of his vehicle, and pay him with the generosity of intoxication.

It is likewise needless to say, that the driver, if he had any such hopes as those above stated, was grossly disappointed; and that the worthy Baronet whom he drove to the City did not give him one single penny more than his fare. It was in vain that Jehu appealed and stormed; that he flung down Miss Sharp's bandboxes in the gutter at the 'Necks, and swore he would take the law of his fare.

"You 'd better not," said one of the ostlers; "it 's Sir Pitt Crawley."

"So it is, Joe," cried the Baronet, approvingly; "and I 'd like to see the man can do me."

"So should oi," said Joe, grinning sulkily, and mounting the baronet's baggage on the roof of the coach.

"Keep the box for me, Leader," exclaims the Member of Parliament to the coachman; who replied, "Yes, Sir Pitt," with a touch of his hat, and rage in his soul, (for he had promised the box to a young gentleman from Cambridge, who would have given a crown to a certainty), and Miss Sharp was accommodated with a back seat inside the carriage, which may be said to be carrying her into the wide world.

How the young man from Cambridge sulkily put his five great coats in front; but was reconciled when little Miss Sharp was made to quit the carriage, and mount up beside him—when he covered her up in one of his Benjamins, and became perfectly good-humoured—how the asthmatic gentleman, the prim lady, who declared upon her sacred honour she had

never travelled in a public carriage before, (there is always such a lady in a coach,—Alas! was; for the coaches, where are they?), and the fat widow with the brandy-bottle, took their places inside—how the porter asked

them all for money, and got sixpence from the gentleman and five greasy halfpence from the fat widow—and how the carriage at length drove away —now, threading the dark lanes of Aldersgate, anon clattering by the Blue Cupola of Paul's, gingling rapidly by the strangers' entry of Fleet-Market, which, with Exeter 'Change, has now departed to the world of shadows—how they passed the White Bear in Piccadilly, and saw the dew rising up from the market-gardens of Knightsbridge—how Turnham-green, Brentford, Bagshot, were passed—need not be told here. But the writer of these pages, who hath pursued in former days, and in the same bright weather, the same remarkable journey, cannot but think of it with a sweet and tender regret. What is the road now, and its merry incidents of life? Is there no Chelsea or Greenwich for the old honest pimple-nosed coachmen? I wonder where are they, those good fellows? Is old Weller alive or dead? and the waiters, yea, and the inns at which they waited, and the cold-round-of-beefs inside, and the stunted ostler, with his blue nose and clinking pail, where is he, and where is his generation? To those great geniuses now in petticoats, who shall write novels for the beloved reader's children, these

men and things will be as much legend and history as Nineveh, or Cœur de Lion, or Jack Sheppard. For them stage-coaches will have become romances—a team of four bays as fabulous as Bucephalus or Black Bess. Ah, how their coats shone, as the stable-men pulled their clothes off, and away they went—ah, how their tails shook, as with smoking sides at the stage's end they demurely walked away into the inn-yard. Alas! we shall never hear the horn sing at midnight, or see the pike-gates fly open any more. Whither, however, is the light four-inside Trafalgar coach carrying us? Let us be set down at Queen's Crawley without further divagation, and see how Miss Rebecca Sharp speeds there.

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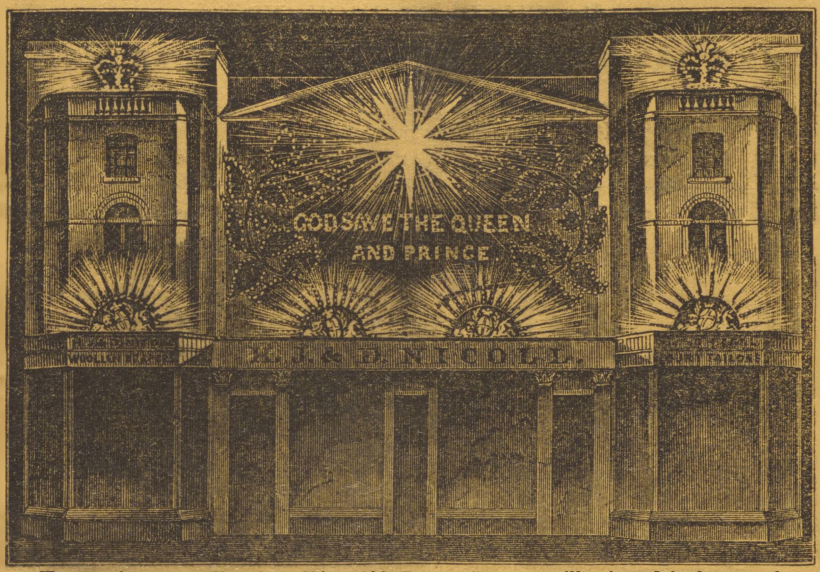

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